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NSC STAFF FOR SINGH

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/04/2016  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [EAID](#) [KDEM](#) [EG](#)  
SUBJECT: EGYPT: MFA TERMS IRI COUNTRY DIRECTOR'S PRESS  
STATEMENT "UNACCEPTABLE"

REF: CAIRO 3363

Classified by Charge Stuart Jones for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (SBU) In a phone call to the Ambassador (in Washington) on June 3, FM Aboul Gheit expressed his concern with statements attributed to IRI Country Director Gina London in an undated interview, which ran in the June 3 issue of Nahdat Misr, an independent daily newspaper. Following up on the FM's telcon, as well as her own June 1 meeting with London (reftel), Assistant Minister for North American Affairs Salama Shaker convoked Charge on June 4 to reiterate the GOE's concerns about IRI's activities. Shaker was joined by her deputy, Mohammed Aboul Dahab and a notetaker. Poloff (notetaker) accompanied the Charge.

12. (SBU) The June 3 Nahdat Misr article, headlined "IRI Director Gina London: It's Our Right to Work in Egypt Without Prior License," focused on the fact that IRI was proceeding with formal activities in Egypt despite not yet having completed its application for registration. (Post has e-mailed a full translation of the June 3 Nahdat Misr interview to NEA/ELA, along with the MFA's public statement on IRI as covered by the governmental Middle East News Agency.) Assistant Minister Shaker said that as a result of the interview, IRI's Egypt operations were now "in a very precarious situation" and that "the damage may be beyond repair" for London. Shaker said that she would need to meet with London, who is currently traveling in the region, as soon as possible after London's return to Cairo on June 8. Charge promised to pass this message to London, and confirmed that NDI and IFES country directors would be meeting with Shaker on June 5 and 7 respectively to discuss their pending registrations.

13. (SBU) Charge noted that regardless of any alleged missteps by IRI staff, the USG firmly believes that maintaining the presence of NDI, IRI, and IFES in Egypt is in the U.S.'s and Egypt's mutual interest, and is crucial to supporting the continued positive evolution of Egypt's democracy. Shaker agreed with this point, but lamented that London's interview, which she characterized as "antagonizing" and "insulting," was a "very sad event."

14. (C) After the meeting, which also covered GOE concerns about a planned June 19 conference on the UN on Middle Eastern minorities (reported septel), Deputy Assistant Minister Aboul Dahab told Charge that the MFA remains committed to ensuring that IRI, NDI, and IFES are allowed to operate in Egypt, but he argued that IRI's decision to formally commence operations with its May 24 reception--despite not having registered under Egyptian law--followed by London's interview in Nahdat Misr--in which she downplayed the importance of securing formal registration

from the GOE--had generated concern about the organization from the President himself. Dahab (please protect) also noted that he believes the security services may have had a hand in the tempest, but said he would need to make further inquiries to confirm this.

JONES